

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

ETH zürich

&

GFZ

Helmholtz-Zentrum
POTSDAM

URGE Demographic Data for ETH/GFZ

This is what was found by ETH-GFZ at GFZ and ETHZ on demographic data (public and internal facing) as well as stated goals for representation, and/or proposals to collect and report demographic data.

The key note is that the GFZ does not register any demographic data. Their treatment of DEI is limited to gender. Reducing inequalities pertaining to gender is, in turn, a fairly well-developed initiative with publically available data.

ETHZ also does not collect demographic data. DEI initiatives are also primarily focused on gender, and they have recently published an [Equality Monitoring Report](#) that documents gender issues at ETHZ. However, recent studies have been carried-out at ETHZ (and other institutions), that highlight subtle forms of ethnicity-based discrimination, that perhaps highlight the benefit of recording demographic data at ETHZ. Multiple [studies](#) have evaluated job applicant call-back rates in Switzerland ([link 1](#), [link 2](#)), and found that individuals from immigrant and minority ethnic groups (non-Swiss) are contacted 4-19 % less, and that individuals with Kosovar and Turkish family names experience lower call-back rates as well (in comparison to immigrants with German family names). This perhaps poses the question: do the same forms of discrimination exist for graduate student and/or faculty applicants from Switzerland?

For German employers, collecting data on ethnicity of their employees is not standard. Indeed, the law rather strictly restricts collection of such data. Below is translated from German privacy protection act (§ 9 DSGVO)

“(1) The processing of personal data from which racial and ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or ideological convictions or trade union membership emerge, as well as the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the unambiguous identification of a natural person, health data or data on sexual life or the sexual orientation of a natural person is prohibited.”

A number of exceptions to this first paragraph are detailed in the second paragraph of the law and include, among others, that the collection of the data was approved by the employee or that



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the collection is necessary in order to exercise rights or to fulfill legal obligations under labor law, social security law, and social protection law.

These restrictions lead to a situation where many employers, including GFZ, don't collect ethnic data. The number of employees with international passports will be known, but data on the numbers are not openly available. This state of affairs is in stark contrast to government support to increase diversity of gender in institutions and to integrate people with disabilities into the workforce.

Seems similar in Switzerland: "There is little data available on other aspects of diversity at ETH Zurich, which is also the case at most other universities. This is mainly because statistics on many diversity metrics are not regularly collected due to the often private and sensitive nature of the information."

- **The link(s) to demographic data at our organization are here:**
 - [Link](#) – Employer information of the GFZ
 - [Link](#) - *ETH Employer information.*
 - [Link](#) – Equal opportunity plan and data
 - [Link](#) - *ETH equal opportunity initiatives*
 - Ethnic data are not available (see above).

- **How does your organization compare to others, or to the field as a whole?**
 - With a lack of measures to increase diversity beyond gender, the GFZ obviously lags behind movements in the US, as well as the measures taken at the level of the European Geosciences Union ([Link](#))
 - *ETHZ is also behind on diversity initiatives in comparison to the US. But there seems to be growing interest in evaluating diversity: "For this reason, it would be important to conduct surveys in which respondents could provide the information voluntarily. Universities need to have a picture of the diversity of their communities: having information about which groups are more in the minority or majority provides insight into which groups may face more challenges in dealing with stereotypes."*

- **Public goals on demographics or increasing representation:**
 - There are general goals stated with respect to gender diversity within the plan linked above:
 - For example: "Our managers in administration and research are actively engaged in guaranteeing equal opportunities and promoting women and men based on their professional and personal potential. "



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- Or: “The GFZ is committed to [...] visibly increase the percentage of women in management roles.”
- At [ETHZ](#): “We are committed to offering women and men the same opportunities to study, do research and work successfully at ETH Zurich.”
- There are there measurable objectives stated within the plan linked above
 - For example: “Although the percentage of women at management levels 1-3 has risen significantly in recent years, the focus is now on a gradual increase to 30%.”
- Suggested additional goals for your organization:
 - Actions we will take:**
 - Contact people at EGU/ETHZ/GFZ to discuss what the current initiatives are in terms of collecting data to understand diversity in the geosciences (in Europe)
 - Ideal goals**
 - Broaden the definition of diversity beyond gender to include ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identify, and social background. Also other contexts? E.g., learning and teaching approaches.
 - Potentially implement a glossary on how we define race, racism, and DEI with respect to ethnicity.
 - Sensitize employees toward DEI issues by including questions about these topics in the employee surveys, or even implement an employee training.
 - Collect data on at least ethnicity and perhaps sexual orientation, gender identify, and social background. Collection of these data will have to be voluntary (as per the law). Moreover, any publication of these data will have to average over large enough group sizes to avoid an identification of individuals.
- **Policy or proposed policy for collecting demographic data at your organization:**
 - Data could be collected voluntarily during employment or renewal of contracts. Legality of the measures will have to be discussed.
 - We propose that DEI is more broadly defined and diversity in social and ethnic background actively sought out.
- **What did you learn about other organizations (or in general) while investigating demographic data?**
 - Germany and Switzerland are far behind the US in the public and institutional discussions about DEI beyond gender.



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- The state of the debate in the public and pushes from legislators (or the lack thereof) seem to play an important role for institutional policies.
- Data collection will have to carefully consider that individuals should not be identifiable.